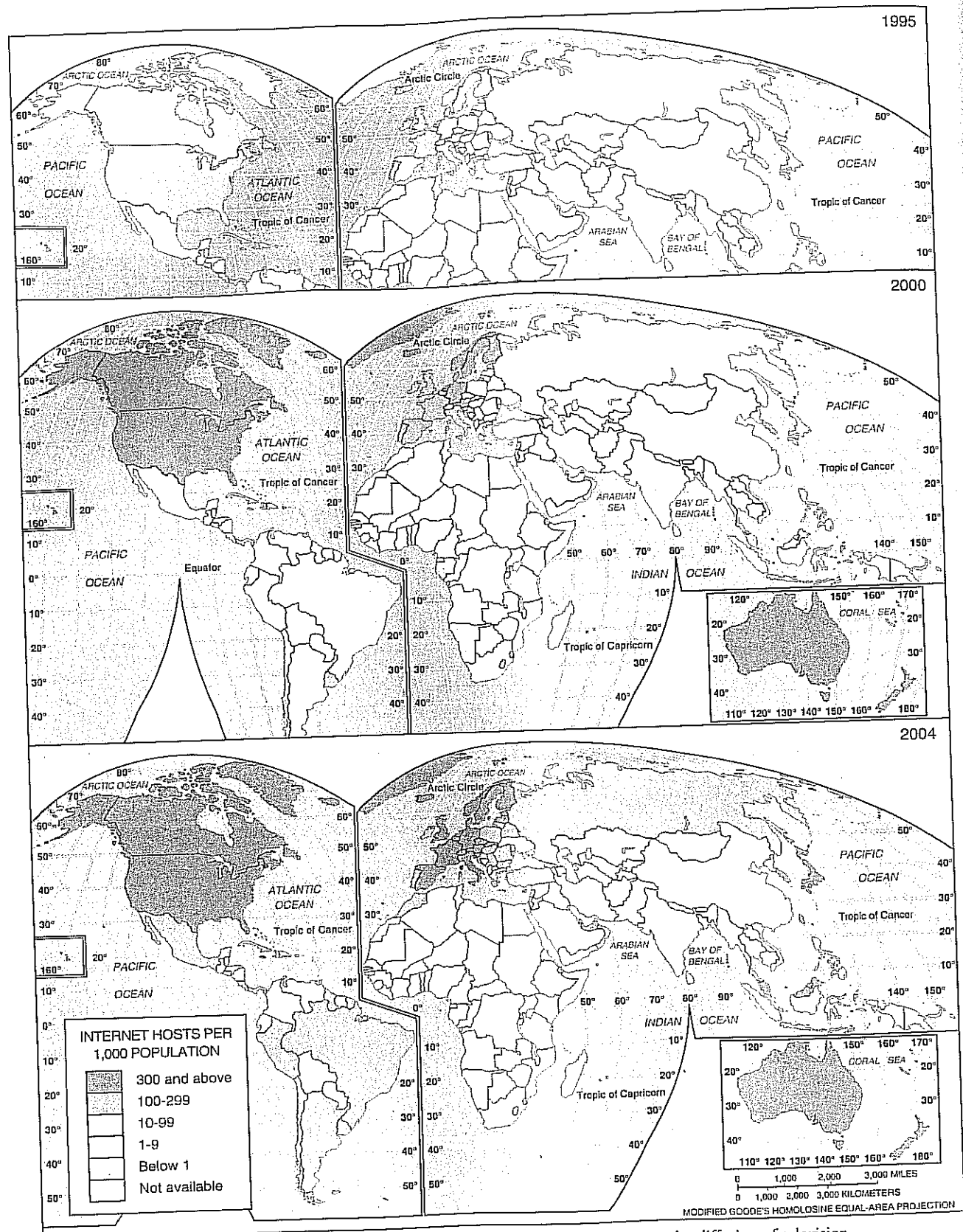


**FIGURE 4-14** Televisions per 1,000 inhabitants in 1954, 1970, and 2003. Television has diffused from North America and Europe to other regions of the world. The United States and Canada had far more TV sets per capita than any other country as recently as the 1970s, but several European countries now have higher rates of ownership.



**FIGURE 4-15** Internet users per 1,000 inhabitants in 1995, 2000, and 2004. Compare to the diffusion of television (Figure 4-14). Internet service in the twenty-first century is following a similar pattern to the diffusion of television in the twentieth century, with the United States having a much higher rate of usage at first and other countries catching up. However, Internet service is diffusing much more rapidly than television did.



Accessing the Internet is possible in many locations around the world, including the streets of some cities in China.

Direct management of TV through a government agency is typical of LDCs, including China and India, as well as many other countries in Africa and Asia. Government operation was also typical in Communist countries in Eastern Europe. Governments control TV stations to minimize the likelihood that programs hostile to current policies will be broadcast—in other words, they are censored.

**REDUCED GOVERNMENT CONTROL.** In the past, many governments viewed television as an important tool for fostering cultural integration; television could extol the exploits of the leaders or the accomplishments of the political system. People turned on their TV sets and watched what the government wanted them to see. Because television signals weaken with distance and are strong up to roughly 100 kilometers (60 miles), few people could receive television broadcasts from other countries. George Orwell's novel *1984*, published in 1949, anticipated that television—then in its infancy—would play a major role in the ability of a totalitarian government to control people's daily lives.

In recent years, changing technology—especially the diffusion of small satellite dishes—has made television a force for political change rather than stability. Satellite dishes enable people to choose from a wide variety of programs produced in other countries, not just the local government-controlled station.

A number of governments in Asia have tried to prevent consumers from obtaining satellite dishes. The Chinese government banned private ownership of satellite dishes by its citizens, although foreigners and upscale hotels were allowed to keep

them. The government of Singapore banned ownership of satellite dishes, yet it encourages satellite services, including MTV and HBO, to locate their Asian headquarters in the country. The government of Saudi Arabia ordered 150,000 satellite dishes dismantled, claiming that they were “un-Islamic.”

Governments have had little success in shutting down satellite technology. Despite the threat of heavy fines, several hundred thousand Chinese still own satellite dishes. Consumers can outwit the government because the small size of satellite dishes makes them easy to smuggle into the country and erect out of sight, perhaps behind a brick wall or under a canvas tarpaulin. A dish may be expensive by local standards—twice the annual salary of a typical Chinese, for example—but several neighbors can share the cost and hook up all of their TV sets to it.

The diffusion of small satellite dishes hastened the collapse of Communist governments in Eastern Europe during the late 1980s. For the first time, Eastern Europeans living beyond the signal range of Western broadcast stations could watch TV programs from Western Europe and North America. Eastern European countries have allocated some of their channels to such foreign broadcasters as CNN and MTV, because after many years under Communist control, citizens still do not trust the accuracy of locally produced television programs.

Satellite dishes represent only one assault on government control of the flow of information. Fax machines, portable video recorders, and cellular telephones have also put chinks in government censorship. TV broadcasting has also migrated to new media, such as computers, cellular telephones, and other handheld devices. Programs can be viewed on demand, sometimes at a fee.

## KEY ISSUE 4

### Why Does Globalization of Popular Culture Cause Problems?

- Threat to folk culture
- Environmental impact of popular culture

The international diffusion of popular culture has led to two problems, both of which can be understood from geographic perspectives. First, the diffusion of popular culture may threaten the survival of traditional folk culture in many countries. Second, popular culture may be less responsive to the diversity of local environments and consequently may generate adverse environmental impacts.

### Threat to Folk Culture

Many fear the loss of folk culture, especially because rising incomes can fuel demand for the possessions typical of popular culture. When people turn from folk to popular culture, they may also turn away from the society's traditional values. And the diffusion of popular culture from MDCs can lead to dominance of Western perspectives.

## Loss of Traditional Values

One example of the symbolic importance of folk culture is clothing. In African and Asian countries today, there is a contrast between the clothes of rural farmworkers and of urban business and government leaders. Adoption of a more developed society's types of clothing is part of a process of imitation and replication of foreign symbols of success. Leaders of African and Asian countries have traveled to MDCs and experienced the sense of social status attached to clothes, such as men's business suits. Adoption of clothing customs from MDCs has become a symbol of authority and leadership at home. The Western business suit has been accepted as the uniform for business executives and bureaucrats around the world.

Wearing clothes typical of MDCs is controversial in some Middle Eastern countries. Some political leaders in the region choose to wear Western business suits as a sign that they are trying to forge closer links with the United States and Western European countries. Fundamentalist Muslims oppose the widespread adoption of Western clothes, especially by women living in cities, as well as other social customs and attitudes typical of MDCs. Women are urged to abandon skirts and blouses in favor of the traditional black *chador*, a combination head covering and veil.

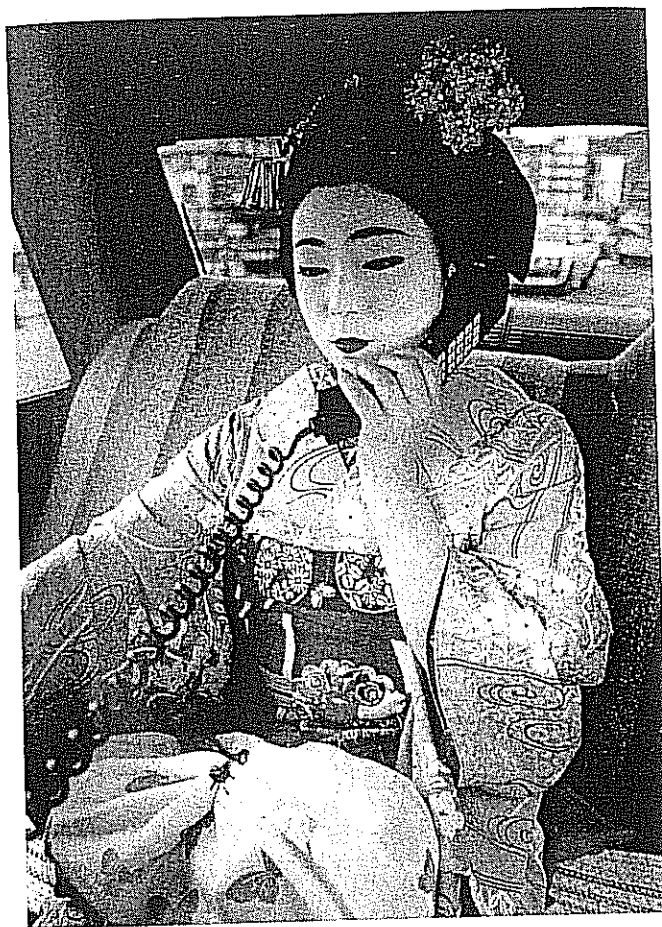
In its 1997 presidential election, Iran was presented with a sharp contrast between Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, who favored banning Western popular culture not in accordance with strict Muslim practices, and a more moderate candidate, Mohammad Khatami, who favored more tolerance of Western cultural influences. Religious and military leaders supported Nateq-Nouri, but young people overwhelmingly supported Khatami. A 21-year-old woman said, "I want Khatami to win because I want to continue wearing my blue jeans." Khatami won.

**CHANGE IN TRADITIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN.** The global diffusion of popular culture threatens the subservience of women to men that is embedded in many folk customs. Women were traditionally relegated to performing household chores, such as cooking and cleaning, and to bearing and raising large numbers of children. Those women who worked outside the home were likely to be obtaining food for the family, either through agricultural work or by trading handicrafts.

Under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan during the late 1990s, women were treated especially harshly. Women were prohibited from attending school, working outside the home, seeking health care, or driving a car. They were permitted to leave home only if fully covered by clothing and escorted by a male relative. A woman behaving like a "Westerner" in public, such as wearing fingernail polish, revealing her face, or walking alone, could be beaten or shot.

Advancement of women was limited by low levels of education and high rates of victimization from violence, often inflicted by husbands. The concepts of legal equality and availability of economic and social opportunities outside the home have become widely accepted in MDCs, even where women in reality continue to suffer from discriminatory practices.

However, contact with popular culture also has brought negative impacts for women in LDCs, such as an increase in prostitution. Hundreds of thousands of men from MDCs, such as Japan



Geisha. Exposure to modern technology does not necessarily change the traditional role of women in many societies. In Kyoto, Japan, a geisha girl, who is trained to provide entertainment for men, arranges appointments on her way to the restaurant where she entertains her male clients.

and Northern Europe (especially Norway, Germany, and the Netherlands), purchase tours from travel agencies that include airfare, hotels, and the use of a predetermined number of women. The principal destinations of these "sex tours" include the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, and to a lesser extent Indonesia and Sri Lanka. International prostitution is encouraged in these countries as a major source of foreign currency. Through this form of global interaction, popular culture may regard women as essentially equal at home but as objects that money can buy in foreign folk societies. (See Global Forces, Local Impacts box.)

## Threat of Foreign Media Imperialism

Less developed countries fear the incursion of popular culture for other reasons. Leaders of some LDCs consider the dominance of popular customs by MDCs as a threat to their independence. The threat is posed primarily by the media, especially news-gathering organizations and television.

Three MDCs—the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan—dominate the television industry in LDCs. The Japanese operate primarily in South Asia and East Asia, selling their electronic equipment. British companies have invested directly in management and programming for television in Africa. U.S. corporations own or provide technical advice to many Latin American